

DOES NOT EXIST.  
KE CLEAN COAL.



FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.THISISREALITY.ORG

## Russia's Deep-Sea Flag-Planting at North Pole Strikes a Chill in Canada

By Doug Struck  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Tuesday, August 7, 2007; A08

TORONTO, Aug. 6 -- A dramatic submarine dive to plant the Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole last week has rattled Canadian politics and underscored the growing stakes as the ice cap melts in the oil-rich Arctic.

[Canada](#) and the United States scoffed at the legal significance of the dive by a Russian mini-sub to set the flag on the seabed Thursday. "This isn't the 15th century. You can't go around the world and just plant flags" to claim territory, Canada's minister of foreign affairs, [Peter MacKay](#), told reporters.

But the government here has been thrown on the defensive by the Russian action, accused by critics of doing too little to meet a deadline for the five Arctic nations to map and claim huge areas of the Arctic seabed.

A [U.S. Coast Guard](#) icebreaker left [Seattle](#) on Monday for an area 500 miles north of Barrow, [Alaska](#), where a contingent of 20 scientists are to continue compiling an undersea map in preparation for a U.S. claim of the resources there.

Canada has not equipped itself to do the same. It has no icebreakers heavy enough to tackle the Arctic ice head-on.

In the view of opposition leader Jack Layton, head of the New Democratic Party, the government has responded with little more than rhetoric to threats to Canadian sovereignty in its frozen backyard. "Canada must move quickly and make immediate, strategic investments in its Arctic," Layton said Sunday.

The 1982 [U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea](#) gives each of the five Arctic nations -- Canada, the United States, [Russia](#), [Denmark](#) and [Norway](#) -- 10 years after their ratification of the treaty to map out the Arctic seabed.

The maps, along with sediment samples and other scientific information, can be used to claim parts of the seabed that are extensions of the continental shelf of each nation. The claim would apply to the buried resources, not to the water above.

For years, progress under the international treaty was slow. The United States has not ratified the convention, though observers expect that to happen soon under the Democratic-controlled Congress. Global warming has added a sudden urgency to the process by thinning the Arctic ice cap, making drilling and shipping more feasible.

The potential rewards are great. The [U.S. Geological Survey](#) estimates that 25 percent of the world's undiscovered oil and gas lies in the Arctic.

"The huge irony is that we are only talking about this because humanity has burned so much oil and gas that the ice is melting," said Michael Byers, an international law expert at the [University of British Columbia](#) in [Vancouver](#). "It could be a vicious cycle: Climate change is opening up the Arctic to oil and gas drilling, which almost certainly will cause more climate change."

Russia, the first of the Arctic nations to ratify the treaty, has undertaken extensive mapping using its huge nuclear-powered icebreakers. Norway and Denmark have also conducted undersea mapping. Canada, which ratified the treaty in 2003, is cooperating with Denmark on the ice northeast of Ellesmere Island, setting off explosives to seismically map the ground under the Lincoln Sea region of the [Arctic Ocean](#).

The United States has been mapping the Chukchi Cap area since 2003, according to Larry Mayer, director of the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the [University of New Hampshire](#). That area is not expected to conflict with Russian claims, he said.

Mayer, who will join the icebreaker USCGC Healy as chief scientist, said the U.S. mapping effort will be greatly aided by sonar mapping done by [U.S. Navy](#) nuclear submarines that routinely cruised under the Arctic cap during the Cold War. That classified information has gradually been made public for scientists' use, Mayer said.

Canada historically has considered much of the North American side of the frozen Arctic its territory and bristles at U.S. claims that the thawing Northwest Passage through that area is an international strait. Prime Minister [Stephen Harper](#), who is to tour Arctic communities this week, has called the Arctic "central to our identity as a northern nation."

But Canada has no northern deep-sea port and no submarines capable of traveling under the Arctic cap; its aging icebreakers were built for work on the Arctic's edges and in the St. Lawrence Seaway. It has a minimal military presence in the north and counts on the traditional presence of the native Inuit people to bolster its claims to the thousands of scattered islands that make up the Canadian

archipelago.

Layton said Canada's larger problem is its failure to try to stop the warming that is opening up the Arctic. "Climate change policy is northern policy, and we have no time to waste," he said.

*Staff researcher Natalia Alexandrova contributed to this report.*

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

### Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

© 2007 The Washington Post Company

#### Ads by Google

##### [Volunteer In Russia](#)

For An Unforgettable Experience Volunteer Abroad To Aid Humanity.  
[www.CrossCulturalSolutions.org](http://www.CrossCulturalSolutions.org)

##### [World's Deepest Lake](#)

World's Deepest Lake Is Even Deeper Watch This Story Online  
[www.russiatoday.com](http://www.russiatoday.com)

##### [Need Icebreaker Ideas?](#)

Get Creative Icebreaker Ideas Here! The Latest Hot Topics.  
[LifeScript.com](http://LifeScript.com)